

aftermath of the fall of the Roubenian kingdom, a member of this branch settled in Akn, where an ancestor named Markar was born in 1691.¹¹⁸ In a futile attempt to give his claim some historical authenticity, this cleric mentions the historian Zenob Glak. Yet this Patriarch fails to mention, by design or ignorance, that another cleric had issued a similar genealogical certificate in 1779: the prelate of Akn, in his search for the origins of the same family, traces it back to 1494, to a progenitor belonging to “the royal Roubenian race.”¹¹⁹ There was no evidence for the whole story, just the good word of the *Vartabed*, i.e. the celibate cleric. Contemporary writers questioned the blood relation of the family to the royal Roubenian dynasty, but accepted its descent from the fifteenth century ancestor at face value.¹²⁰

Although available sources cite only a few instances in which *amiras* deliberately sought proof of nobility, all indications point to the conclusion that such ambition was prevalent and general. Hovhannes *Amira* Dadian had instructed the prelate of Akn to look for his ancestral lineage,¹²¹ while Mgrditch *Amira* Djezayirlian, at the pinnacle of his power, must have elicited the certificate from the Patriarch. Wealthy and therefore economically secure, these people cared most about prestige and honor in their own circle, and they could aspire to no status than that given by nobility of blood, which could confer upon them a special place in their “high society.” Epigraphs and inscriptions continually make reference to their “princely ancestry” and “nobility of lineage.”

Their life-style and behavior reflected this preoccupation and mentality, which was as much Middle Eastern as European. *Amiras* lived in large, comfortable and beautiful houses, some of which were actually palaces. Mgrditch *Amira* Djezayirlian built a sumptuous palace in Yeniköy, on the seashore,¹²² which was the envy of Armenian and Turkish notables, while the Dadians, the Diuzians, the Balians and others owned large estates with palatial houses.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 159-160.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 160. This childless ancestor, named Melik Bugham, was finally blessed with a son whom he named Hoviv, as suggested by the monk seen in his dreams. The family was called Hovuian after this Hoviv.

¹²⁰ **Arshag Tchobanian**, editor’s note in *Anahid* 3, nos. 3-4 (Paris, 1931): 151-152.

¹²¹ **Boghosian**, *Dadian Gerdastane*, pp. 9-14

¹²² **Zartarian**, *Hishatakaran*, p. 28; **Azadian**, *Akn II*, p. 115.